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ABSTRACT

Educational leaders must be perceived to act consistently and with integrity. When leaders are conscious of beliefs and values, they will act spontaneously in a consistent manner, and their actions, embedded in their beliefs, will have an underlying harmony. School principals must embrace the concept of empowerment and dignity of the individual and attend to the personalities, needs, and growth of those involved with the lives of children if they are devoted to the growth and development of those children. To assist in the development of a common goal of individual empowerment, principles of adult learning are suggested as a basis for learning and working with teachers. These principles, viewing the principal as teacher and the teacher as learner, involve these practices; (1) supporting and encouraging the teacher as learner toward new possibilities for self-fulfillment; (2) helping the teacher as learner clarify aspirations toward a possible potential; (3) helping the teacher as learner diagnose the gap between aspirations and the present; (4) accepting the teacher as learner as a person of worth and respecting the teacher's feelings and ideas; (5) nurturing relationships; and (6) expressing his or her own feelings and contributing resources as a co-learner in the spirit of mutual inquiry. A bibliography concludes the paper. (WTH)

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PRINCIPALS AND THE HUMAN CONDITION

REFLECTIONS OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

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The educational community like all others is populated by people who think and act on the basis of their beliefs, their values, and the values within the situation (Rokeach, 1973; Feather, 1975). The culture of the educational environment summons up values that are intrinsic to learning, the learners, the needs of society and the interaction of all those living within that culture.

Values are driving forces in the maintenance and the strengthening of the human condition. An important social institution like the elementary school transmits, generates and reflects the values of the learners, the parents, and the educators who live, work and communicate within the culture of that school. (Sarason, 1982).

Combs (1982: 4) believes that, "possession of a comprehensive, congruent and accurate frame of reference is a prime requisite in any truly professional activity". Several value systems permeate and drive the program and instructional decisions that are developed and implemented by educators. Decision options are screened through the beliefs of the educational leaders who are an integral part of the cultural milieu within the school. Positions are taken about what to teach, how to teach and why certain things should be taught based upon individual points of view and the varying influences of external expectations.

Beliefs and values are ways of being, not merely theoretical constructs (Neil, 1983). We live in a daily sea of events and interactions that cannot be meaningful until we place our point-of-view, our value structure, upon emerging situations. Nor can others make sense of our actions until they begin to understand our way of seeing the world and how we frame behaviour. Personal values are reflected in the decisions of leaders in the school and can indeed become an ethos that permeates an entire building. (Greenfield, 1982; Sergiovanni, 1982).

As a principal I gain strength and energy from reflection upon and examination of the values I communicate through my actions and my decisions. I know that I have the greatest difficulty in leading, supporting or encouraging others to take risks toward their own growth if I'm questioning my own integrity. My integrity is nurtured by my own sense of congruence and consistency. My success as a school leader lies within my ability to model what I believe to be human, supportive and integrative behaviour. This does not preclude the questioning and challenging from those with whom I live and work. To be sure it demands that I continually reflect upon what effect my beliefs and actions may be having upon the teachers, students and parents within the school community.

ROLE OF VALUES FOR AN EDUCATIONAL LEADER

Educational leaders must be perceived to act consistently and with integrity. When the leader is conscious of beliefs, actions are likely to be embedded in these beliefs and have an underlying harmony. Individual actions will be connected to what the leader truly values, rather than being temporarily hooked to passing custom or practice. It is unbelievably difficult to express beliefs honestly and exactly; however, the struggle is requisite for needed growth as educators. It forces each person to uncover those precise ideas to which he or she has profoundest allegiance. It gives the leader a paradigm for action and the confidence of inner integrity that is so necessary to withstand and understand the complexities of daily problem-solving. The paradox is, that statements of the deepest commitments are both solid and restless. While they are the best basis for action now, they demand constant reexamination as experience reveals new issues.

A leader whose beliefs are well articulated cannot only plan actions that will demonstrate these beliefs but will be more likely to act spontaneously in a consistent manner. Too often leaders, whose beliefs are not clear get cau;ght overvaluing swift decisiveness based on the nearest rule, because the only alternative seems to be

muddling through on the basis of pressures and ill-defined feelings. Decisions based on beliefs may require moral energy; however, for this reason they can transform daily activities in a busy school day into connected meaningful situations. In order to survive the dailiness of ever-increasing complexities, educators must see and feel the psychological connectedness that a framework of beliefs can provide. My framework is based upon the worth and dignity of the individual, and his or her need to experience the elation of growth. Such a belief is founded in the "individual imperative" (Hopkirk, 1986).

THE VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

"While schools can be viewed from a wide array of perspectives, and public education has a host of goals, stated and hidden, it is suggested that the individual imperative is the most appropriate cornerstone upon which to base policy and administrative decisions in schools." (Hopkirk 1986: 6)

This statement by Hopkirk underlines the value of the individual in the school organization, and the ever-present need to see and recognize each person within the school community as a human being with needs and potential. My value base requires that I re-examine my actions

within the framework of the individual imperative. If my raison d'être is the growth and development of children, I must attend to the personalities, needs and growth of those who are directly involved with the lives of these children.

Scott and Hart (1979) suggest seven values which provide a framework for nurturing the growth and development of the individual. Each value speaks to the empowerment and the dignity of the person, concepts we must hold to if we truly believe in the need for educating our children to become empowered and self-reliant problem-solvers. Two particular values of the seven provide cornerstones for empowerment:

1. Individuals are born with an innate need to develop psychologically, socially, intellectually and fraternally, through all the stages of their lives.

2. Individuals have the right to expect that their personal and unique worth be recognized by the community and its organizations.

(Scott and Hart, 1979: 226)

The premise of empowerment is one upon which I choose to act. The remainder of my paper then is a reflection upon what empowerment of the individual means in action and in the daily lives of our school community. We as a group are on the threshold of shared meaning and as we arrive at this point in our history I recognize our struggles, our despairs and our elations. And so it will continue.

REFLECTION UPON GROWTH

During our time together we have begun to articulate and demonstrate beliefs about learning, growth and the role each of us plays toward empowering ourselves, our peers and the children in our care. This has taken place formally, developing a shared vision of how we want to be, and informally, as we place our daily lives in the school upon the tapestry of the beliefs we have articulated.

Sharing beliefs is analagous to sailing on the same ship, and charting a common course. However, many times the waters are turbulent and the course needs to be re-affirmed by all.

In order to sustain a common course based upon the concept of the individual imperative, the empowerment of all is necessary for the quality of the journey. To do this we have begun to use principles of adult learning as a basis for learning and working together. The substance of the principles reflects the value of the teacher as learner and consultant, and each one provides a structure for supervisory practices.

PRINCIPLES OF TEACHER AS LEARNER

1. The principal as teacher supports and encourages the teacher as learner toward new possibilities for self-fulfillment.

2. The principal as teacher helps the teacher as learner clarify their own aspirations toward a possible potential.

3. The principal as teacher helps the teacher as learner diagnose the gap between aspirations and the present.

4. The principal as teacher accepts the teacher as learner as persons of worth and respects their feelings and ideas.

5. The principal as teacher nurtures relationships.

6. The principal as teacher expresses his or her own feelings and contributes resources as a co-learner in the spirit of mutual inquiry.

The implementation of the adult learning principles emerges as teachers meet with teachers to develop plans and to assist one another in their classrooms. These principles are also the cornerstones for the principal/ teacher discussions about students, learning and teaching. Unfortunately we do battle with the exigencies of the dailiness of our lives in order to produce the reflective moment. However, the strength of belief underscores the need to communicate, therefore we all try with the same insistence, to make those moments happen.

The concept of empowerment coupled with the principles of adult learning has moved us all within the school community to share frustrations, ask for help and offer support. It has illuminated the role of principal as counsellor and conversely, teacher as counsellor. Within this role, with its emphasis upon a trusting relationship, we are coming to recognize one another as persons rather than locking ourselves into the constraints of a role. Our expectations of one another emerge from our shared beliefs not from a locked in view of what "administration" does, what"the classroom teacher" does. The shift from a traditional view of "the administration" to one of the principal as counsellor, co-learner, problem-solver is a painful

one for some and a natural process of growth for others. We are experiencing a period of disequilibrium as defined in Piaget's terms and we are moving towards a renewed sense of equilibrium, one which carries in its centre the empowerment of the individual.

The value of the worth and dignity of the individual provides the fabric into which the work of the school is woven. The quality of instructional strategies, program implementation, codes of behaviour and school improvement plans evolvesfrom a sense of personal empowerment that is lived and felt by each member of the school community.

The reality and immediacy of our lives causes us to question one another and ourselves, yet gradually we see the connectedness of our actions. Beliefs about learning, the learner and change are implicit in our questioning; the fact that we are risking the hard questions now, is a statement that we are moving toward a renewed sense of community and equilibrium. The hard questions now provide the framework for our future actions. We would not have the substance for our questions without having articulated what we believe in and what we are trying to accomplish. We have begun to build a commitment to one another and to the learner's innate need to be distinct and the best he or she can be. We are an educational community.

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